Media Training Success: How Anyone Can Become A Media Pro In 20 Minutes

TJ WALKER

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There are four skills needed in order to ace any media interview:

1. How to look comfortable, confident and relaxed (if you are on TV or video).
2. How to create a simple, three-part, 30-second message.
3. How to answer questions in an interview.
4. How to create and speak in sound bites so that you can get the exact quote you want in the final story.

Note: For purposes of discussion in this book, I will use "quote" and "sound bite" interchangeably anytime I am referring to any of your words that are edited and get used in a final text, audio or video news story.

You will get sick and tired of reading me write this throughout this book but I cannot stress enough how important it is to record and watch each practice interview that you do.

I have spent 30 years training people to appear in the media and I have found the following truth: the most important thing that sets people apart who simply get

through a media interview without messing up from those who shine in their media interviews is that those who shine and excel spend time rehearsing and watching how they **look** and **sound**.

Looking And Sounding Your Best On Camera:

The techniques in this book are not meant to turn you into an actor when you are doing your media interview.

Rather, I want to give you a toolbox of skills that you can use so that you will come across as a more confident and relaxed version of yourself.

The following are some of the basic skills that you can use during your rehearsal process and during your actual interviews.

1. ***Prepare*** to go on TV by first practicing on video. (If you are not doing a TV or video interview, then please skip to the messaging section). You can easily record yourself using a cell phone or webcam.
2. ***Record*** yourself talking and then review the video.

If this were twenty years ago when video cameras and recording equipment were expensive, then there might be some excuse for not being able to record yourself.

Now, every new iPhone, Blackberry, and computer with a webcam is its own self-contained recording device. You can use these to record your mock interviews or rehearsal at any time and in any place.

Advances in technology have left it virtually impossible to use the excuse that you were not able to record yourself

numerous times. There are no excuses for not having seen multiple versions on video of what your messages and sound bites look and sound like.

3. Sitting Angles

We have all heard the saying that the camera adds twenty pounds. It does if you sit the wrong way.

Often times, it is how someone is sitting that does them in.

Below are two examples of how NOT to sit during an interview and one example of the PROPER way to sit.

What **NOT** to do:

1) Leaning back and slouching NO!

This might be a comfortable way to sit at your desk during work hours but it is an awful way to sit during an interview.

What do you notice about my appearance? Don't be bashful.

Let me help you out. You see rumpled clothes, my belly hanging out, and the start of a double chin.

Save leaning back in your chair for when you are on a long conference call or thinking about your next million-dollar idea.

2. Sitting straight with perfect posture NO!

This is how our mothers told us to sit. Proper posture means sitting straight up and stiff as a board.

Does that look like someone who is comfortable on camera?

What you **SHOULD** do:

1. Hold yourself up high, lean forward 15 degrees and look into the camera or at the person interviewing you.

You no longer see a rumpled appearance, double chin, and your eyes do not immediately go to my midsection.

The camera latches onto what is closest.

As you can see from this angle, it is not a very natural or comfortable looking position but the alternative is to not look your best.

When you do not look your best or are presenting a distracting image to the viewer, there is a higher likelihood that they will not be paying attention to the message you are trying to communicate.

4. Eye Contact

Your eyes are one of the most noticeable things on camera. If you are looking off to the side or looking at yourself in the monitor at the side of the camera you will come off as shifty eyed on camera.

Shifty eyed individuals look untrustworthy or as if they are trying to hide something.

Unless you are doing a satellite TV interview you should always look right at the reporter, the same way you would look right at someone whom you were having a conversation with.

Skills 5 through 8 deal with body language techniques.

5. Record yourself with your face blank, and now record with a slight smile.

   You do not want to have a gigantic TV evangelist smile but you do want to have a slight upturn to the corners of your mouth.

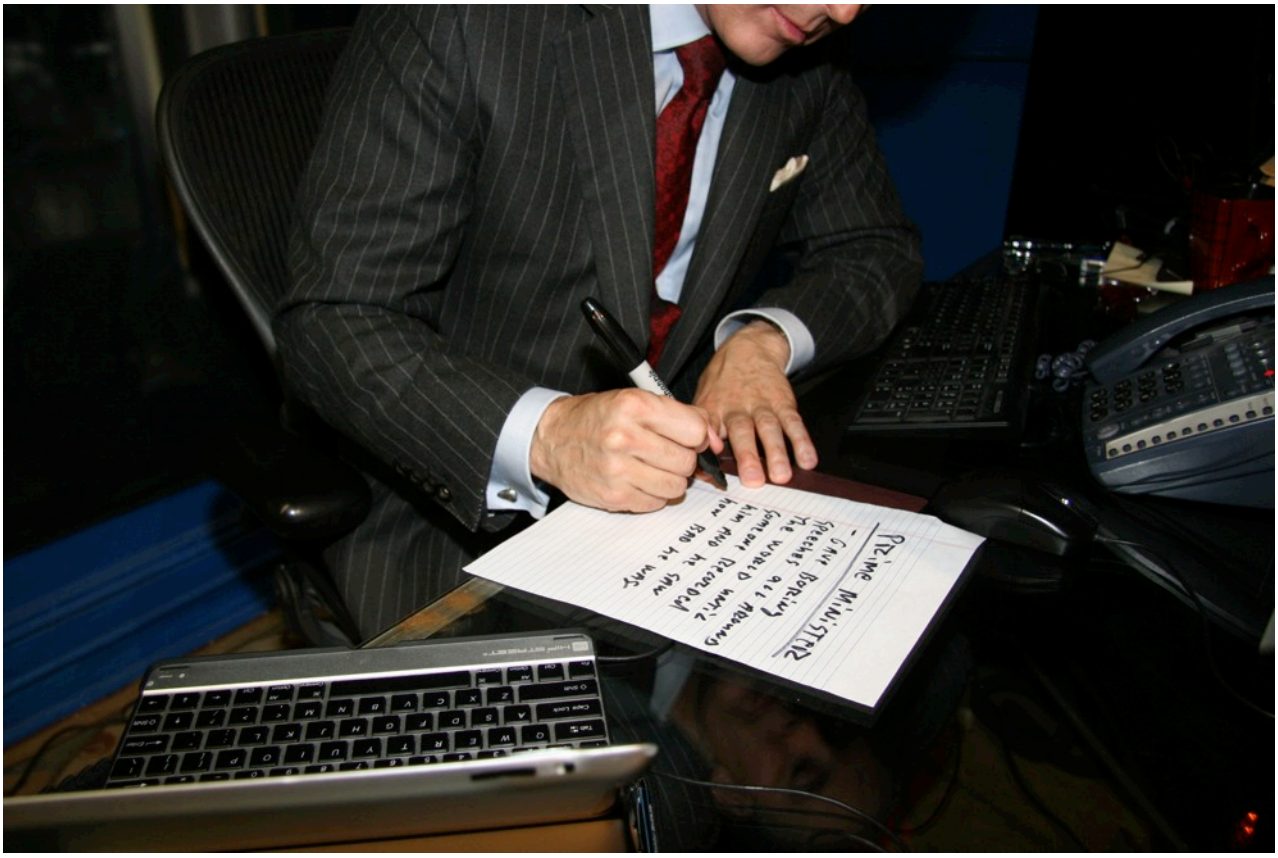
6. Record with head frozen. Now record with your head and face moving.
7. Record with body stiff. And now record with body moving.

8. Record with hands frozen and then with hands moving.

Preparing For The Interview:

MESSAGE

1. Write down every message on the particular topic of your interview. Make sure that each message contains no more than one idea. That means no “ands” “buts” or “however”. Try to limit each message to 10 words or less.

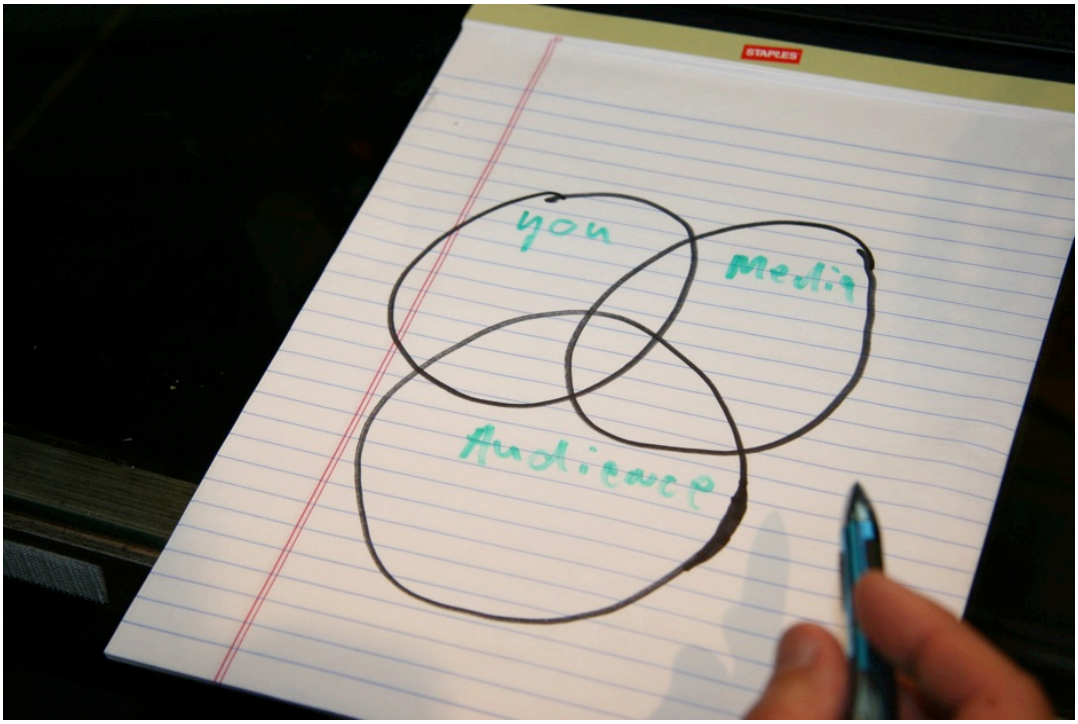


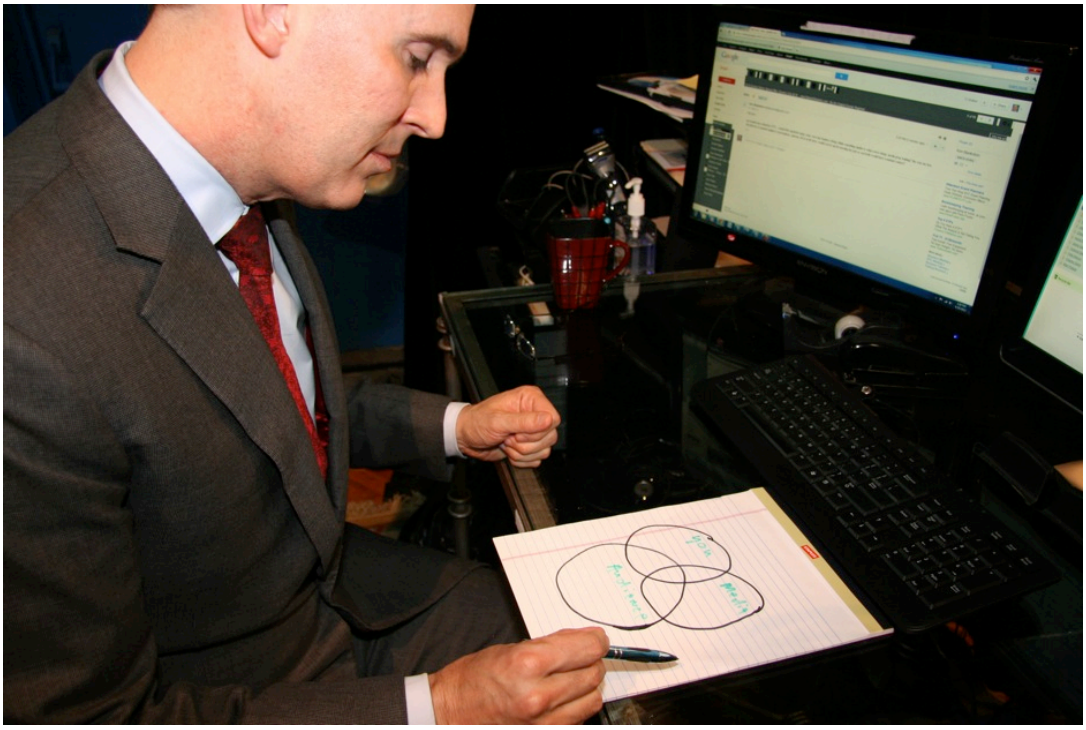
2. Take all of your general marketing messages from your website, brochure and advertising campaigns.

Scrutinize them to make sure they are 100% relevant to the media interview topic at hand. If they aren't 100% relevant, throw your marketing messages in the trashcan—you won't need them for this interview.

3. Create a Venn diagram with 3 circles. Place all of the messages that are important to you in one circle. Place all of the messages that would be interesting to the media in another circle. Finally, place all of the

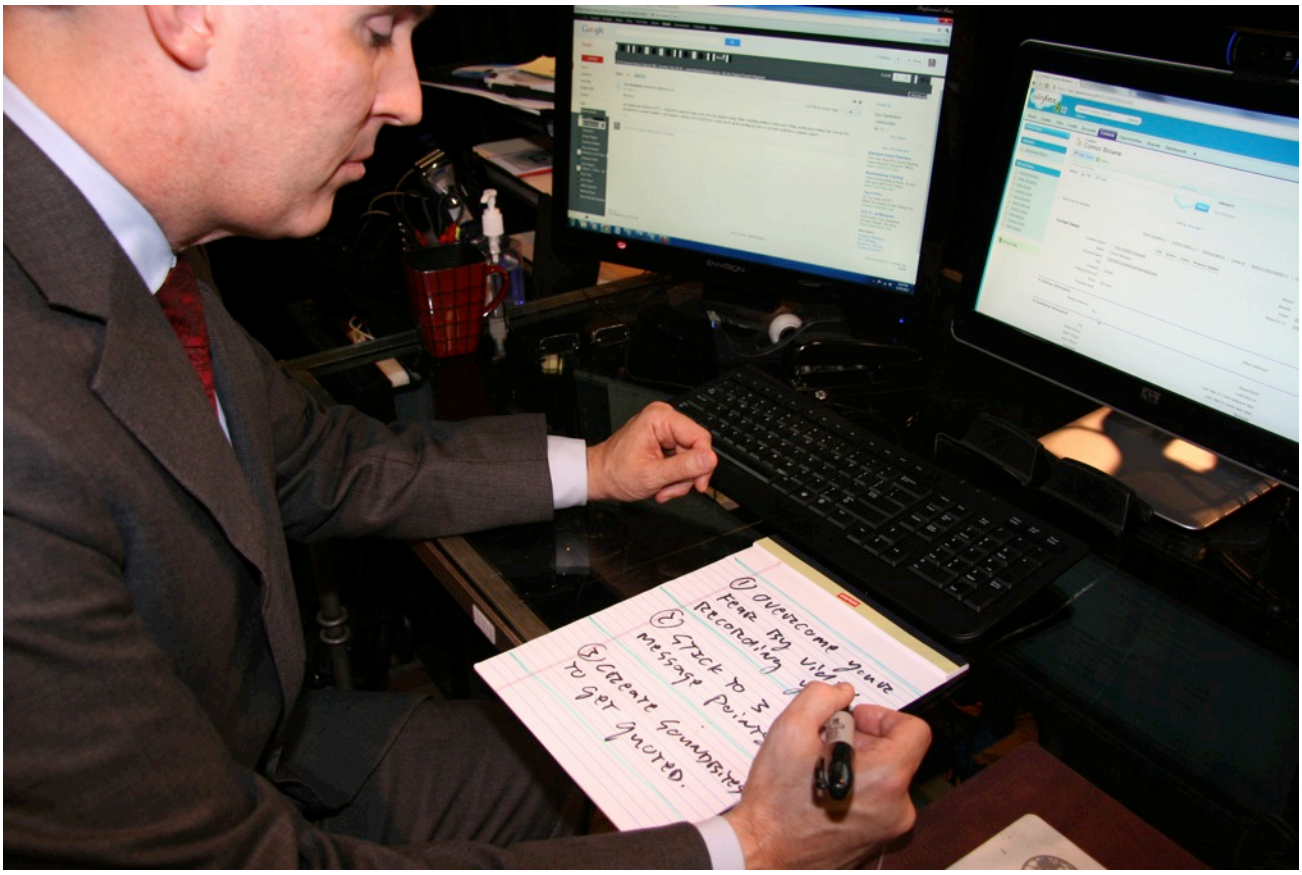
messages that would be of interest to the audience of that media outlet in another circle.



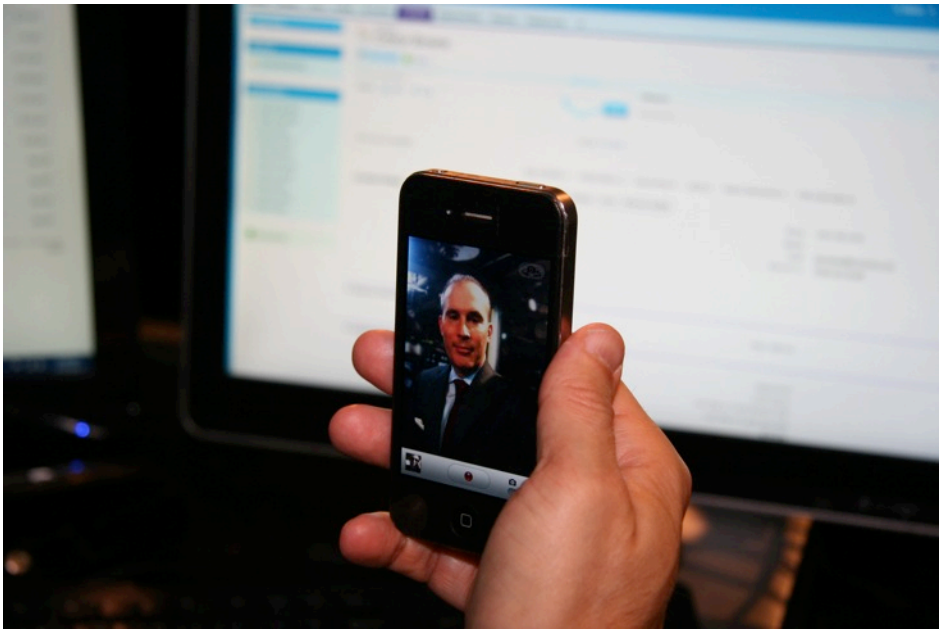


4. Isolate just the messages that fit in the overlap of the Venn diagram and are clearly of interest to all three constituencies: you, the media and the audience of that media outlet.

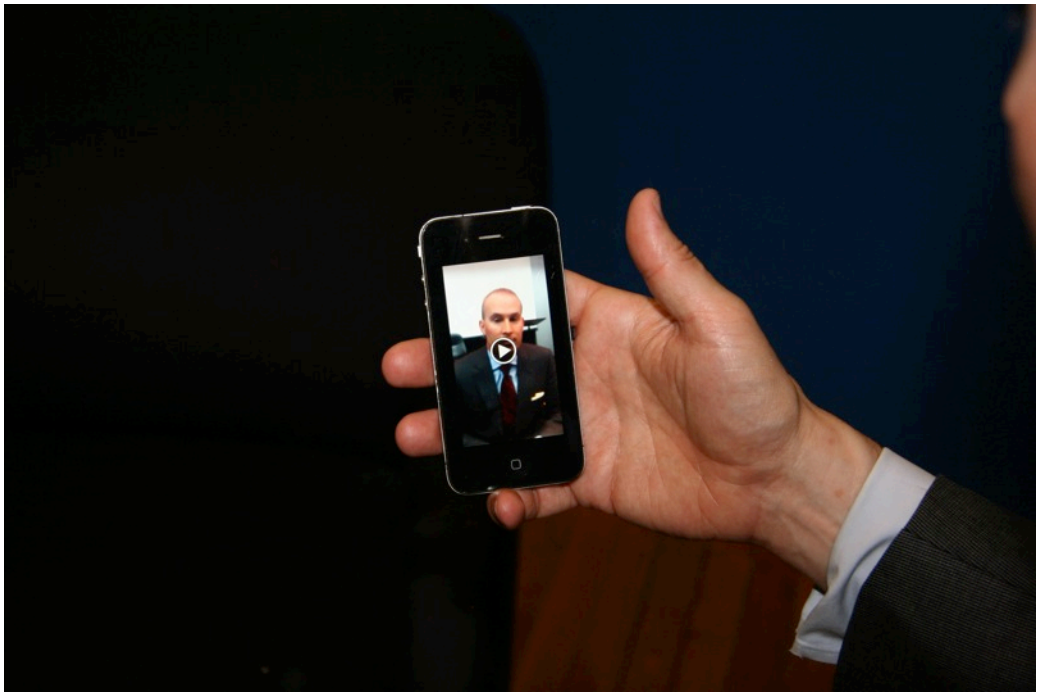
5. Narrow your final list of messages down to three. You should be able to say all three messages points in 30 to 45 seconds.



6. Say your message points out loud and record on video using a webcam or any portable video camera.



7. Watch and listen to your video and judge your messages.



8. If you don't like all of your messages, then tweak them or change them until you are happy.

Answering questions

1. Stare at your three message points on a sheet of paper or a computer screen throughout the whole interview if you are doing a radio interview or telephone interview. If you are doing a TV interview, then look carefully at your message points right before your interview begins.

2. Answer questions briefly and then bridge back to your message points.

3. Rewrite tough questions to make them easy. This is the hardest part of answering questions in media interviews. If you hear a question you think is tough, mean or stupid, then it is your job to re-write the question to make it seem easier, friendlier, and less confrontational. This is NOT the same thing as dodging questions. You must answer every question at some level, but it can be on your own terms. This is the most important skill to learn.

4. Bridge back to all three of your message points in every single answer. Let me repeat this because it sounds crazy the first time you hear or read this: "Bridge back to all three message points IN EVERY SINGLE ANSWER!!!" You can vary the order, change the words, use different levels of abstraction and mix up the examples, but conceptually, you should hit all three message points in every single answer.

Sound Bites

Every quote you read in a text article and every sound bite you hear on TV or radio comes from a reporter interviewing someone and then editing out a “bite” out of the “sound” made from the whole conversation.

99% of the words are thrown away and a few are kept and turned into the quotes or sound bites and inserted into the story. While topics vary and reporters’ interests can change, the actual sentence structure of what gets used as quotes or sound bites is remarkably consistent.

All quotes you read in newspapers and online text stories come from ten separate, distinct speech patterns. These ten speech patterns are also present in all TV and radio sound bites. In order to master the art of the sound bite you must have a thorough understanding of these ten speech elements.

Bold Action Words

“We will crush them.”

Examples

“I like juice” is abstract

“I love Welch’s Grape Juice” is an example.

Emotions

“It was the happiest day of my life.”

Attacks

“We will pulverize the competition”

Absolutes

“We are 100% certain that…”

Clichés

“They are selling like hot cakes”

Humor

Use humor with caution – most humor is harmful and attacking.

“The only way to make your PC go faster is to throw it out a window.”

Rhetorical Questions

“Are we the best in the world?”

Analogy

“Solid as a rock”

Pop Culture References

‘’We are the New York Yankees of the…”

One more thing to keep in mind; a good sound bite is only good if it is on your message.

The 3 Easiest Sound Bites To Use:

1. Sound bites using **emotion** are really easy because all you have to do is describe how you feel about your message point and that turns it into a sound bite.

2. **Absolutes** are also really easy because all you have to do is insert a “must,” “always,” “never,” or “absolutely” into the message and it becomes a sound bite.

3. And what else is really easy for most people to use when creating sound bites? **Rhetorical questions**; all you have to do is restate your message as a question and it becomes more quotable.

When in doubt, you can rely on these 3 sound bite structures. They are fast, easy and require absolutely no creativity or literary skill on your behalf.

Now you must brainstorm on effective sound bites for each one of your message points. You should have at least 6 sound bites for each message point.

Next, you should read all of your sound bites out loud and record them using an iPhone or voicemail. Now play back your sound bites. Scratch off any that you are uncomfortable with and reaffirm the good ones you like.

Next, prepare your message/sound bite cheat sheet. All three of your message points and your six sound bites for each message point should fit on a single sheet of paper.

Next, you need to rehearse your interview with a friend or colleague and video record yourself in the process. Take a moment to brief your colleague on likely questions you anticipate a reporter asking you. Don't obsess over getting the questions right because questions are the one part of the interview process you

have no control over. Pretend this is a telephone interview with an online or print reporter, so you may look at your notes during the entire interview.

Play back the video and make careful notes on what you like and don't like.

Next, conduct another rehearsal interview on video. This time, pretend you are doing a TV interview. That means that you cannot look at your notes and you must not only answer the question, bridge to message points and deliver sound bites, but you must also look comfortable, confident and relaxed too.

Next, watch your video. Write down everything you like about how you come across on one side of a piece of paper. Write down everything you don't like on the other side of the paper.

Redo your interview again. Try to do more of what you like and have written down as "positives" from your notes. Do less of what you don't like.

Review the video.

Conduct another video recorded rehearsal. Play back the video and stop it every 10-12 seconds while you are speaking. Ask yourself “If this is the only 10-12 seconds that gets on the air tonight, am I happy?”

If you can honestly say, “yes” to that question, then congratulations, you are done preparing and you are now ready for your interview. If you aren’t happy with every single 10-second segment of your interview, then keep rehearsing and keep reviewing the video until you are happy.

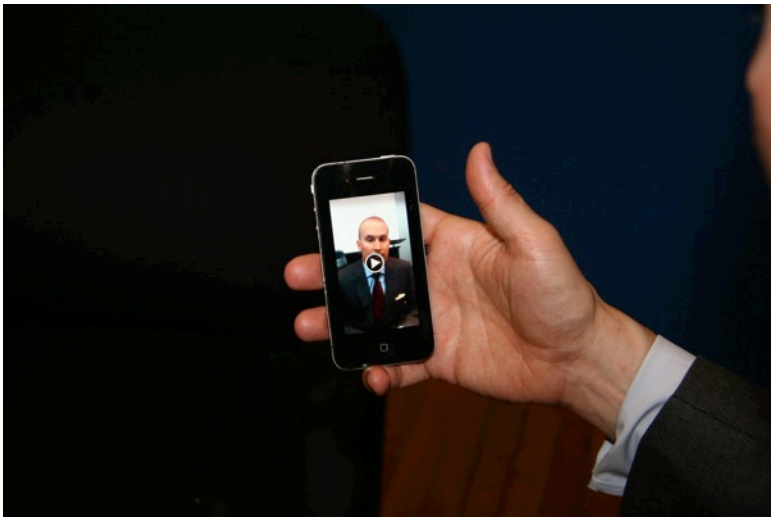
I have one final bit of advice when it comes to rehearsing.

Do not limit yourself to rehearsing in your office or in a controlled environment. You will not always have the luxury of time or perfect conditions.

There are no excuses for not rehearsing. Arrive early for an interview and pop out into an empty hallway or stairwell for privacy to record a brief interview with a

colleague if you want one final run through of your message points or to practice sound bites.

Of course you should always take a moment to review your mock interview and learn from anything that you are able to improve.



If you are by yourself take a moment before your interview to review your message points and sound bites before your interview.

Good luck with your interview! (Although if you follow the exact steps as outlined in this brief book, you won't need any luck!)

About the author:

TJ Walker has been the personal presentation coach to Presidents, Prime Ministers, CEOs, US Senators, Super Bowl Winners, and Nobel Peace Prize Ministers.

He conducts training's and delivers speeches around the world to help people master the art of appearing in the media.

tj@mediatrainingworldwide.com

212 764 4955